Be Wise and Accept Gods Free Gift!
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> Acts 2:37-38
> Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?
> 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Peter calls on the people to repent. They have to do it themselves. Coming to repentance is an action of the human being. What God could do, He has already done in the past through the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross and His resurrection on the third day. After that, He was seated at the right hand of God in heaven. Then the Lord brings His Word to man.
If someone accepts that Word, the Lord will cause him to be born again. Through the new birth one receives the resurrection life of Christ and, on that basis, has part in a New Creation and lives under the New Covenant. The call “Be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20) is therefore actually Christ’s plea to mankind. But whether a person is reconciled to God depends on the person himself; he must make that choice. If he then comes to faith in the Word of God, he shares in God’s election. For God simply chooses those who believe.
Believers are therefore by definition the elect, and unbelievers are not. One should love the Truth, seek it, and accept it. For when a person comes to the knowledge of the Truth, he is saved. “Knowledge of the Truth” is not merely knowing the Truth, but above all sharing in the Truth and being involved in it.

How does one come to repentance?
By believing the Word of God instead of placing your trust in your own thoughts or the words of men. You must accept the Word of God.
For some people this is difficult. They struggle to accept what others say, and they struggle even more to accept what God has said. They have all kinds of objections to the Word of God. The question is why, for the Word of God has proved itself reliable in every possible way.
All that is needed to come to repentance is to put your trust in the Word of God. The difficulty many people have with this lies in the many complicated theories about conversion that exist. Some say you must first come to a knowledge of your misery. But that only serves to bring man under the law. It does not lead to repentance. Others say you must first gain plenty of experience or “feelings.” But this too is unnecessary, for we can simply take God at His Word.
Moreover, the Bible gives us numerous examples of people who heard the Word of God for the first time and then repented immediately. Some were even baptised straight away!

The Gospel

In Acts 2 we find the prototype of gospel preaching. Peter says here that he is permitted to speak freely. In this way the Gospel is proclaimed openly for the first time, without any covering. The Gospel is the message concerning the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This message was logically only preached freely after the resurrection had actually taken place.

> Acts 2:29-37
> 29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.
> 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;
> 31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.
> 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.
> 33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.
> 34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,
> 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.
> 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.
> 37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

The Psalms that Peter quotes in these verses speak first and foremost not of David, but of the Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter even adds that David himself knew this. The Gospel is therefore essentially that the Lord Jesus died, was buried, was raised, and was then seated at the right hand of God in heaven. It concerns His victory over death and thereby over sin, the law, principalities, powers, and “spiritual wickedness in high places” (see Ephesians 6:12).

Peter preached these things, and when the listeners heard it all, they were “pricked in their heart” (v. 37). It is indeed the intention that man should be “pricked in his heart.” The heart is the inner man. It has to do with what you believe, how you think, and how you experience things. When your heart is pricked, it means an end comes to your own reasonings. On the one hand, the listeners in Acts 2 naturally had their own theories and philosophies regarding the Old Testament Scriptures. On the other hand, they also had their ideas about Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified on the basis of those ideas (v. 36). The problem with the heart is that it always reasons. But the foolish heart of the natural man is darkened and his thoughts are vain:

> Romans 1:21
> 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as

> God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

The natural man has a dark heart because there is no Light in it. He does reason, but he arrives at nothing. Thinking does not bring man to God.

> 1 John 5:20
> 20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

God has given us understanding so that we may know Him that is true — so that we would listen to His Word and use our understanding to make that Word our own and to comprehend it.

Back to Acts 2. After the hearers of Peter were pricked in their heart, they asked Peter what they should do. The answer is in verse 38.

Repent and be baptised

> Acts 2:38
> 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Notice what Peter does not say. He does not say, “Let yourselves be repented.” No, he says, “Repent.” Repentance was something they had to do themselves.

The Lord brings His Word to man. If he then accepts that Word, the Lord will cause him to be born again. God therefore gives the new birth, New Life. In doing so God also makes us His children. But not in such a way that we then come to repentance or faith — it is exactly the other way round. So when we are willing and open our hearts to the Word of God, He gives us New Life in that same heart through His Word. In doing so we also receive the Spirit of God, by whom that Word was brought forth. Thus we are born again.

The word “repentance” already implies that it is not so much about something you must do, but much more about something you must stop doing. “Repentance” means you stop something. You stop thinking up your own philosophies. You stop trying to make yourself pleasing to God and trying to walk in a way that pleases God in the flesh. And you stop with all the arguments such as: “Yes, God did say this, but He didn’t mean it like that”; or “God did say it like that, but we misunderstand it”; or “That is in the Bible, but not everything in the Bible is the Word of God.” That is how it often goes — sadly, even in Christian circles.

But the Bible simply says: “Repent.” In other places of Scripture it says you must believe. The jailer in Philippi asked, “What must I do?” — the same question the Jews asked Peter in Acts 2. Paul answered the jailer:

Acts 16:31
31 … Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

You must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is no more difficult than that. To repent is simply to turn around from the way you are going. To come to faith is nothing other than making a choice. You choose the principles from which you want to live. If you believe, you hold the Word of God to be

true. For the Word of God proves itself to be the Truth. Truth is by definition that which is unshakeable, despite all the attacks made on it daily. The Truth is what is best for man.
Christ Himself is the Truth. He said so in John 14:

> John 14:6
> 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

The Lord Jesus is not just one of the great prophets, like Buddha or Mohammed. No — Jesus of Nazareth says of Himself that He is the Truth. And of Him it is written that He has been given a Name above every name:

> Philippians 2:9
> 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.

There is no other Name. That is why we should be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is only one Truth; there are not several truths. In the same way there is only one lie: the lie that the Lord Jesus is not the Truth. If there is a lie, it does not matter which one it is. For the devil it makes no difference which word, message, or philosophy one chooses. They can all exist side by side.
The Bible does not honour man. Scripture says there dwells no good thing in man:

> Romans 7:18
> 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

The earthly man cannot be improved. Man should listen to the Word of God. That is the message here. That is why Peter said in Acts 2:38 that every person must repent and be baptised “in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” That is all that is needed. Other Scriptures confirm this.

> Acts 8:36-38
> 36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?
> 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
> 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

No one hindered the eunuch from being baptised. The Lord had no problem with it, nor did the apostles. Baptism happens from one moment to the next.
The eunuch was reading Isaiah in his Bible but understood nothing. Then Philip came and asked if he understood what he was reading. The eunuch wanted to know of whom the prophet was speaking — himself or someone else. Philip answered that the prophet was speaking of “someone else” —

namely the Lord Jesus. And so Philip preached Jesus to him. Nothing more was needed. The man came to faith on the spot.
They immediately spoke about baptism as well. Philip told the eunuch there was no problem with being baptised, provided he believed in the Lord Jesus with all his heart. There was no need to wait for a certain period of time or for spiritual maturity — it could happen right there and then.

The receiving of the Holy Spirit
Back to Acts 2:38. If you repent and thus come to faith, you receive new life and, at the same moment, the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is Christ Himself. You receive the New Life of God at the moment you come to faith. When you came to faith, you immediately received that same Spirit.

> Acts 2:40-42, 44, 46
> 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.
> 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.
> 42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.
> 44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;
> 46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

"Save yourselves from this untoward generation" in verse 40 is the same as the call to repent. Notice that when the people asked in verse 37, "What shall we do?", Peter answered: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you." The account then continues in verse 41: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." So what does "repent" mean? It means to accept God's Word — that is, to believe. Nothing more. To accept the Word, you do not have to do anything. The continuation of this is found in verse 42. "The apostles' doctrine" means what the Bible teaches. The apostles taught the Scriptures. On the very day they came to faith, they chose for the Word, stayed with it, and occupied themselves with it. The Word of God is the food with which every believer should nourish himself. That is all that is needed for a healthy spiritual life. That is why it is also called "the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 6:3). The Bible is God's food for us, and it contains everything we need for our spiritual growth and for the maintenance of our spiritual health. It also contains everything to keep us immune to strange and deviating teachings. A person needs nothing more.

Accepting means receiving or taking
"Accepting" means "receiving" or "taking." If someone holds something out to you and you take it, then you accept it. You have to decide at the moment it is offered to you. You say "Yes, thank you" or you say "No, thank you." You either take it or you do not. In Acts 2:42 the same thing is actually said four times. It is about the fellowship that believers have with one another on the basis of the Word of God. Prayer is the expression of

that fellowship, and so is the breaking of bread. As believers we come together when we continue stedfastly “in the apostles’ doctrine” and submit ourselves to the same Truth — to the Word of God. That is fellowship. This is repeated in verse 44, where all the believers are together. In verse 46 we also read that they came together daily with one accord in the temple. Already in the Old Testament it is written that only one thing is needed: to be taught in the temple. Incidentally, the Word of God was also kept in the temple in former times, like a library.

> Psalm 27:4
> 4 One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

Back to Acts 2:46. They came together “and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.” “Singleness of heart” means without ulterior motives, with a heart that is filled only with the Word of God. “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:10). Furthermore, gladness flows out of this “singleness of heart.” It is about simplicity — the heart is devoted to one thing only. There is only one goal. The Word of God provides for everything. It is the only real Life, the only true sustenance we have. That is why the Lord also said to Martha that only one thing is needful.

> Luke 10:42
> 42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

It is important to be taught in the Word of God. Everything else adds nothing. “The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich” (Proverbs 10:22). That blessing comes to us in His Word. Let us continue with Acts 2.

Added to the Church

> Acts 2:47
> 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Here it says that “the Lord added to the church daily.” It does not say that the Lord saved people daily, or that He converted people daily, or that He brought people to faith daily. That is not how it works. The Lord adds to the Church. Where repentance is concerned, a person must repent himself — he must make this choice for the Word of God himself. The only thing the Lord does in this context is offer us that Word. He has it preached and brings it to us. But we must take it.

When we come to repentance — that is, when we believe God’s Word — we are added by God to the Church. The expression “such as should be saved” does not refer to the Church itself, but to those who believe. Who does the Lord add daily to the Church? Those who are saved. To what does the Lord add those who are saved? To the Church! There is only one Church. The Lord adds us to it at the moment we come to faith. This same thought appears in several places in the Bible. For example, in John 1:

> John 1:1-5
> 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and

the Word was God.
2 The same was in the beginning with God.
3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

John explains here how God has spoken from the very beginning. That is why he also calls God “the Word.” God is by definition the One who speaks. If the Creator is the Speaker, then the creation is the listener. John further explains how the Light — that is, the Word of God — came into a dark world. That world did not know God. The Light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not grasped the Light. That means people do not accept it.

John 1:11-13
11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:
13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

In verse 11 we read that His own did not receive Him. Then in verse 12 it says that one becomes a child of God on the basis of receiving this Light — the Word — that is, by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. To whom has God given power to become children of God? To those who received Him, that is, those who believe on His name. Those who receive Christ are those who believe. The reverse is also true: those who believe in Him are those who have received Him. In verse 13 we also find the expression “born of God.” What is called in Acts 2:38 “ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” is called in John 1 “ye shall be born again.” For one receives the Spirit, New Life, the Life of God, the Life of Christ, and thereby becomes a child of God. We have this certainty because it is written in the Bible.

Every believer shares in God’s election

Every person should therefore accept the Word of God. It is not difficult, no conditions are attached, and there are no complications. It is not the case that one person is allowed to accept it and another is not. The doctrine of election as taught in the whole Bible is not to be found in that form. We do encounter the word “election,” but not the idea that one person is chosen and another is not. The biblical idea behind “election” or “predestination” is that when you come to acceptance of the Word of God, you share in God’s election. God simply chooses those who believe. That is why believers are the elect and unbelievers are not. God has already made His choice. Then He made that choice known, and since then the choice is man’s. Throughout the entire Bible we find God’s call to man so that he would listen to what He says, submit to His Word, and ultimately do what God commands him.

Looked at from the other side, God always complains that He speaks but no one listens. If it were true that God only chooses certain people and the rest cannot be saved by definition, one could ask: “What exactly is God

complaining about? Did He not arrange it Himself?" But that is of course not how it is. God is not the One who chooses some people and lets the others perish. God is the One who sends His Word to man and says that everyone who believes shares in His election. If we take it, we receive eternal Life with that Word. Since the Word is Life, this happens in one moment; and since the Word is Spirit, we receive the Holy Spirit at the same time.

Spiritual things and spiritual people

We now turn to 1 Corinthians 2. There we read that what man, despite all his intelligence, cannot think up, God has made known to us. He has prepared it for us.

> 1 Corinthians 2:9-10, 12-16
> 9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.
> 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.
> 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.
> 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.
> 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.
> 15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.
> 16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

God has revealed His Wisdom to us by His Spirit. For man can never get further by himself than mere human knowledge. If you want to know the Being and the Work of God, you must listen to God's Word. That Word comes to man through the Spirit of God. In verse 12 we read that we have received the Spirit "that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." In verse 13 we read that the Truth which comes to us by the Spirit is, by the apostle Paul, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" or preached to spiritual people. "Spiritual" refers to spiritual men. This does not necessarily mean people who hold a certain office in the Church. "Spiritual" people are those who allow themselves to be filled with the Word of the Spirit.

Verse 14 speaks of the natural man — the soulish man who reasons from his own observation and experience. That man does not understand the things of the Spirit of God. He does not take them, he does not accept them. To him they are foolishness and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. Spiritual things are therefore joined with spiritual people — and also with the spiritual Truth we have already received. It begins with accepting the Gospel in the narrowest sense: the

message of the death and resurrection of Christ. And when spiritual things are then preached to us, they are joined with what we already know about it. By then we are already born again and have already received the Spirit. That is what it connects with. You must first have the foundation, and only then can you go further.
You can only understand spiritual truths when you grasp that God fundamentally does away with the old creation and brings in a New Creation in its place. That means He causes a New Creation to come forth out of the old, after which the old creation disappears. That is God's work.

> Ephesians 4:21-24
> 21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:
> 22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;
> 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
> 24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

We have therefore been buried with Christ and raised with Him (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12). Death and resurrection. He is the true Way to Life. Christ is the true, living Way (John 14:6). Everything else in biblical Truth is directly connected to this and based upon it. That is why it is also called the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets.

> Ephesians 2:18-22
> 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.
> 19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
> 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;
> 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:
> 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

To be able to build, a foundation is first required. In this way spiritual things are joined together with spiritual things — and with spiritual people. If one rejects those spiritual things, then nothing remains of spiritual Truth, and the Truth is stripped of all its spiritual aspects. All that is left is human philosophy. Faith is the opposite of philosophy and religion. Believers do nothing; they let something happen. Believers listen. Religion is pride — the desire to climb up to God. Faith, on the other hand, is humble submission to God.
Back to 1 Corinthians 2. Verse 14 tells us that the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God. Verse 15 speaks of born-again people who have learned to think spiritually. "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." You cannot tell from the outside whether someone is spiritual, because it concerns what is happening in the inner man. The spiritual man is therefore not recognised. In this way we become "strangers and foreigners" and, as

believers, we go “outside the camp” (Ephesians 2:11-22; Hebrews 13:13). We receive grace and Life from what God gives, while the rest of the world lives by the principles of religion and law. They feel they must do something to become better people or to climb up to God. But we believers feed ourselves on the Word of God. The “good works” then come naturally as a result of the Life we have received.

The believer should not let go of the biblical message

We now come to 1 Corinthians 15.

> 1 Corinthians 15:1-2
> 1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;
> 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

In verses 1 and 2 it says that the brethren had accepted the Gospel. They stand in it and are saved by it. They do not have to do anything for it, but they do have to hold on to it. A believer should be faithful to the Word of God. The Word of God does not change. We should accept that Word and remain with that choice. It is a choice for the rest of our lives, and it should have its effect in us. Once again, no conditions are attached. The only thing that astonishes the apostle in this chapter is that people had once accepted the Gospel but were now letting it go. That is obviously not the intention. The intention is that we make that choice so that we allow ourselves to be taught by the Word of God for the rest of our lives. We should live, think, make decisions, and walk from the Word of God.

We now turn to 2 Corinthians 11. Here we find words of similar meaning. The apostle Paul expresses his astonishment that the Corinthians were not only letting go of the biblical message but were also listening to others who held to a different teaching.

> 2 Corinthians 11:4
> 4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

Here it concerns the preaching of “another Jesus.” On the basis of that preaching one receives another spirit or accepts another gospel. “Receive” and “accept” are again used as synonyms. There is only one thing that honours God: that we open our hearts to Him and believe in Him. That is the only way to receive the Word and the Life of God, and the only way to make God great in our lives.

Then there is 1 Thessalonians 2. Here too the words “receive” and “accept” are used as synonyms.1 Thessalonians 2:13

13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Love for the Truth

We now turn to 2 Thessalonians 2, where the future appearing of the antichrist, the devil himself, is spoken of.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

We see in verse 9 that power, signs, and wonders often go hand in hand with the lie. Verse 10 speaks of “them that perish.” They perish because “they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” They do not accept it! They have no love for the Truth, they do not seek it either, and therefore automatically run into the lie and “the liar from the beginning” (John 8:44). One should love the Truth, seek it, and accept it. That will lead to faith, as the following verses show. The people who perish “received not the love of the truth... that they might be saved.” That is why God will send them “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie” (verse 11).

Of course, these statements relate to the revelation of the man of lawlessness, “the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). But in the days when this “son of perdition” has not yet been revealed, and the mystery of iniquity is still at work (2 Thessalonians 2:7), it operates on the same principle. Where people do not love the Truth, the “spirit of delusion” will come. This spirit will only be actively sent in the future, at the casting down of the devil from heaven to earth and thus at the revelation of the antichrist.

But even in our own days, the liar from the beginning knows how to find us if we do not seek the Truth. For he is “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4) and “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2). God still permits this for the time being. This is the very judgment under which man lives today: God has let the world go, placed it under wrath, and left it in darkness, because it did not want the Light. That is why God will “send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie,” “that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (verse 12).

Why do so many people not know the Truth and hold so many alternative theories? Because they do not love the Truth. They love themselves. They set their own philosophy against the Word of God.

Christ is the Truth. From Him we also receive the Truth. If we reject Him because we consider Him too lowly, too despised and unattractive (Isaiah 53:2-3), then we do not love the Truth and we will perish. Then we have lost the way. The way should lead to Life, and if one has lost the way, one is marked for death. People who perish have not received the love of the Truth and have not believed the Truth. That “accepting” and “believing” are the same is already clear in the Old Testament.

Psalm 95:7-8

7 For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice,

8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness.

The text “To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart” is quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 3:7-8). Today, now, is “the accepted time,” “the day of salvation” (see 2 Corinthians 6:2). When one hears the Word of God, one should simply accept it, open one’s heart to it, and live from it. That leads to the work of God — namely, the new birth. He raises us up with Christ and seats us with Christ in heaven. He predestines us “to the adoption of sons.” The choice is not God’s but ours. He has already made His choice. He presents that choice to us. If we open our hearts to His Word, then we have eternal life. If we do not, then we do not. Therefore there is only one call — the same one the apostle Paul already made: “Be ye reconciled to God.”

Be ye reconciled to God

2 Corinthians 5:15-21

15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Because One died, all died. Those who believe this have received New Life — namely, the life of Christ (verse 15). Verse 17 describes the situation of those who live under the New Covenant and have received a share in the promised blessings. God was reconciling the world to Himself (verse 18). The first phase of that was the death of the Lord Jesus, in which He died in the place of all.

This does not mean that the world was thereby reconciled to God. But it is a necessary step towards it, for one is only reconciled to God through faith in the Risen One. Through the new birth one receives the resurrection life of Christ and, on that basis, has part in a New Creation and lives under the New Covenant.

Paul and Timothy are “ambassadors for Christ.” They also plead on behalf of Christ (verse 20). It is actually a prayer of Christ to man — a prayer in which He asks: “Be ye reconciled to God.” That means: let yourself be brought into a new relationship with God. For it was God who “in Christ” was “reconciling the world unto himself” (verse 19). What God could do, He has done. But whether a person is reconciled to God then depends on the person himself.

It is not that man prays to God and asks whether He will please reconcile him to God. No, it is the other way round. God asks man to make that choice. This has been so since the Old Testament. In the days of Joshua the people were asked:

> Joshua 24:15, 21
> 15 … choose you this day whom ye will serve; … but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.
> 21 And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD.

We can choose whom we will serve. God therefore pleads with man to be reconciled to Him. This thought is also confirmed in 1 Timothy 2.

> 1 Timothy 2:4
> 4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

God wants all men to be saved. Yet it makes little sense to pray for the salvation of all men. That does not help. God already wants that. He wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the Truth. For when a person comes to the knowledge of the Truth, he is saved.

It can even be put more subtly: to the extent that a person comes to the knowledge of the Truth, to that same extent he is saved. “Knowledge of the truth” is not merely knowing the Truth, but above all sharing in the Truth and being involved in it. It is about fellowship.

To “know” is always “fellowship.” It works both ways. Not only should man know the Truth and make it his own, but the other way round: man becomes, to the same extent, the property of the Truth. To the extent that we understand the Bible, it becomes our own. To that same extent we also become the property of that Word.

Amen.